



PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

for greater philadelphia

May 21, 2026

Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

The Preservation Alliance writes in opposition to the proposal to remove the Boyd Theater marquee and vestibule walls and replace them with a conventional storefront system.

The Boyd Theater's 2008 Philadelphia Register nomination describes its distinctive façade, noting "The Boyd Theater, by virtue of its Art Deco façade including the recessed lobby, is a familiar landmark on Chestnut Street... The theater presents its principal façade to Chestnut Street, which is further enlivened with shop fronts, the ticket booth, recessed vestibule for easy ingress and egress, lighted marquee, and elaborate façade and fenestration."

Although the marquee dates to a 1950s-era alteration, the Historical Commission has repeatedly recognized it and the recessed vestibule as integral components of the building's architectural identity and historic significance. The current proposal represents a substantial departure from prior Commission approvals that required the retention and restoration of these features.

In June 2015, the Historical Commission approved redevelopment plans that included "the restoration of the extant marquee, which dates to the 1950s, when the theater was modified for Cinerama." The motion also clarified that the "newly enclosed vestibule remains within the Historical Commission's jurisdiction."

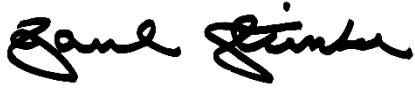
Earlier approvals similarly centered on preservation of the Chestnut Street headhouse, arcade, and marquee as part of the framework that justified extensive demolition under hardship provisions. In 2014, preservation advocates, including the Preservation Alliance and Friends of the Boyd, agreed to withdraw legal challenges, in part, on assurances that the Chestnut Street headhouse, including the theater experience embodied by the façade, arcade, and marquee, would be rehabilitated and preserved.

The staff report correctly acknowledges that removal of the marquee and vestibule walls "does not comply with a strict reading of Standard 9." In reality, the proposal conflicts more broadly with the intent of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards because it removes highly visible character-defining features.

The Boyd Theater has already lost the majority of its historic fabric through earlier hardship approvals. The surviving headhouse, marquee, and vestibule are what remain to communicate the building's history and identity to the public realm. Their preservation was repeatedly promised, reviewed, and approved by this Commission and should not now be reversed.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Historical Commission to deny the application to remove the marquee and vestibule walls at 1910 Chestnut Street.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Steinke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" and last name "Steinke" clearly distinguishable.

Paul Steinke
Executive Director